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Chairman: Mr. Al-Hinai ..... (Oman)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 27: Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/56/140)

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Agenda item 109: Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (*continued*) (A/56/152)

1. **Mr. Dahane** (Morocco) said that the international community was showing a growing interest in social development. At the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in 1995, States had committed themselves to promoting social progress, taking into account the cultural, economic, political and spiritual realities. In the Millennium Declaration, adopted five years later, they had committed themselves to eradicating poverty, halving, by the year 2015, the proportion of people who suffered from hunger and who were unable to reach or afford safe drinking water, and ensuring that children everywhere would be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. The situation had, however, scarcely improved, especially in the developing countries.

2. Since the early 1990s, Morocco, as part of its social development strategy and later in the context of its preliminary draft economic and social development plan for the period 1996 to 2000, had endeavoured to promote sustainable human development and to combat poverty by focusing its activities on persons living below the poverty threshold, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas, those who were marginalized or excluded or those who needed institutionalized social welfare. The strategy should expand the access of the population to employment and to basic social services (the provision of drinking water, schooling, public housing). Morocco had also set itself the goals of ensuring basic education for all children between 6 and 15 years of age by the year 2006, paying special attention to girls and children of rural families, improving the living conditions of disabled persons by, inter alia, establishing specialized administrative structures in cooperation with various public agencies and non-governmental organizations, and improving the social situation of older people through a national plan of action which included social welfare measures specifically targeting them.

3. **Mr. Motomura** (Japan) said that the adoption of a Political Declaration in 2000, at the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, had given a new impetus to the process of social development. One of the issues which caused the greatest concern was the ageing of the population. Japan, where the proportion of persons aged 65 years and older was expected to be almost 25 per cent in 2015, was aware of the economic and social repercussions of that demographic change; for that reason it was promoting the principle of "active ageing" and inviting older people to participate as fully as they wished in the economic and social life of the country. His delegation awaited with interest the Second World Assembly on Ageing, which, it was to be hoped, would provide an opportunity for the adoption of a revised plan of action on ageing which would reflect the current socio-cultural, economic and demographic realities in the world. It thanked the host country and invited Governments to find ways of mainstreaming the issue of the ageing of the world population in the assistance they provided to developing countries.

4. Turning to the issue of persons with disabilities, he noted that, in order to overcome the four types of barriers — physical, institutional, psychological and cultural — which prevented persons with disabilities from participating in social activities, his Government had formulated a new long-term programme whose main objectives were fully consistent with the measures proposed by the Secretary-General in his report (A/56/169), namely, to guarantee equal opportunities for persons with disabilities and enable them to participate fully in community life. Japan shared with developing countries new technologies it had developed and experience it had accumulated over the years. It also contributed through the Japanese Internal Cooperation Agency and other international organizations, such as the United Nations Voluntary Fund on Disability, its Cooperation Fund with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and UNESCO. It welcomed the initiative of non-governmental organizations to

organize three international conferences on the issue, to be held in Japan in 2002.

5. **Mr. Yang** Xiaokun (China), taking the floor on agenda item 109, said that the first World Assembly on Ageing, held in 1982, which had designated 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons, had demonstrated that the international community attached particular importance to the ageing of the world's population. That question remained topical, as demonstrated by the forthcoming Second World Assembly on Ageing, whose rules of procedure and agenda had already been decided by the Economic and Social Council. The Council had also determined the conditions for participation by non-governmental organizations.

6. China — where persons over 60 years of age would represent one fourth of the total population by 2050 — had promulgated laws, regulations and policies on the protection on the rights and interests of older persons. It had gradually built up a pension and social security system through the joint efforts of the State, communities, families and individuals in keeping with the Chinese tradition of respect and compassion for older persons.

7. Since the issue of ageing had a political, economic, cultural and traditional impact, research was carried out jointly by the Government at the central and local levels, the gerontology society and research institutes.

8. **Mr. Navaratnarajah** (Sri Lanka) expressed his delegation's full support for the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action had highlighted the need to create an enabling environment for social development, eradicate poverty, promote productive employment and enhance social integration and capacity-building, while stressing that collective efforts to that end were essential. The twenty-fourth special session of the General Session had called for the allocation of additional resources for that purpose. The Commission for Social Development had identified a number of themes in its multi-year programme for 2002-2006.

9. Sri Lanka believed that social development must be based on a holistic and coordinated approach, be adequately financed and sustainable and take into account both the physical and mental aspects of the human condition. Since attaining independence, Sri Lanka had consistently invested in crucial social sectors such as health and education, with assistance from the private sectors and non-governmental organizations, achieving tangible progress as reflected in the social indicators for maternal and neonatal mortality, life expectancy, the overall health of the population, school enrolment and the literacy rate, and by its low population growth. Nonetheless, unemployment and poverty persisted; nearly one-fifth of the population was living below the poverty line. Sri Lanka had thus adopted a three-pronged strategy aimed at ensuring that the greatest number of people, including the poor, benefited from economic growth; protecting excluded and vulnerable groups and integrating them into economic activities; and empowering every individual to participate in decision-making and to enjoy a life of dignity, freedom and self-fulfilment.

10. The progress achieved in social development had also generated new problems, such as an ageing population. The Second World Assembly on Ageing would therefore be particularly important to Sri Lanka, which hoped that it would culminate in the adoption of a international plan of action. In its poverty reduction efforts, Sri Lanka had to grapple with external factors beyond its control, for example, restricted market access for its products. Without the necessary capital, it could not acquire modern technologies that were both efficient and affordable. Moreover, Sri Lanka received only limited development assistance; it therefore urged countries to allocate the agreed 0.7 per cent of their gross national product to official development assistance. An equitable economic order and the mobilization of adequate development resources, both human and financial, were two key factors which must be respected in order to ensure that the objectives of the World Summit and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly were achieved.

11. **Mr. Regmi** (Nepal) said that socio-economic disparities had widened over the last 10 years, despite the importance accorded to economic and social development by the international community, as demonstrated by numerous international conferences, particularly the World Summit for Social Development, and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, and notwithstanding the efforts of the United Nations and the United Nations Commission for Social Development in that area. Thus, islands of

prosperity had continued to prosper in an ocean of unspeakable poverty. One-fifth of the world's population enjoyed 80 per cent of its resources, while the majority lived on less than one dollar a day. People in developing countries were still living without access to clean drinking water, education or health care. Only a holistic and integrated approach to the social, economic and demographic dimensions of development would improve that situation, which constituted an affront to human dignity. The goal of reducing the number of people living in extreme poverty by half by the year 2015, established at the Millennium Summit, should be supported by targeted programmes, particularly in the areas of employment, education and health.

12. Nepal had adopted, as the sole objective of its ninth plan, the eradication of absolute poverty within the next 20 years, by promoting employment through a number of programmes, such as micro-credit for the poor, a "build your village yourself" scheme and a small-farm development project. Since decentralization of development activities to the local level was critical to ensure social development, Nepal had established autonomous local governments, and was encouraging the participation of the people in resource mobilization and the balanced distribution of the outputs of development at the local level. The family was considered to be the bedrock of Nepalese society; the Government was therefore determined to provide for the promotion and protection of children, support the development and integration of youth, who made up about 27 per cent of the population, ensure the social well-being of older people by providing a small allowance to those over 75 years of age and to widows of over 60, and assist the disabled and other vulnerable groups. Socio-economic development depended principally on the policies of national Governments, but developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, could not attain that goal without external resources, especially as most of their own extremely limited resources were allocated to debt servicing. Foreign direct investment in poor countries was almost non-existent; their own private sector was too small to create substantial opportunities, and their supply sector constraints did not allow them to reap substantial benefits from trade. Therefore, his delegation called on the industrialized countries to increase official development assistance and agree to greater debt relief and, lastly, associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

13. **Mr. Bhattacharjee** (India) said that it was difficult for developing countries to promote the principles of social justice and human rights when they were not even able to satisfy the most elementary needs of their population, confronted with an unfavourable global climate, marked by major trends outlined in the 1997 Report on the World Social Situation (E/1997/15-ST/ESA/252). Thus, there were a few havens of prosperity and larger enclaves of poverty, because developing countries were relegated to the lowest level of the production and distribution systems, while industrialized countries had moved to high profit-earning knowledge and technology-based economies; the share of low- and middle-income countries, as a proportion of the world gross domestic product, had declined from 28.6 per cent in 1980 to 21.6 per cent in 1998, while that of high-income countries had increased from 72.4 per cent to 78.4 per cent; owing to globalization, the value of world imports and exports had increased at a compounded average annual rate of 6.25 per cent between 1980 and 1998, but the share of developing countries had remained stagnant at a quarter of world trade; inequalities within countries had grown during the 1980s; under the effect of liberalization, workers had shifted from the tradable to the non-tradable informal sector, bringing down wages and deepening the dichotomy between the formal and informal sectors. The financial crisis, the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS, the increase in poverty and unemployment, and the significant decline in international cooperation contributed to worsening the situation.

14. Referring to the report of the Secretary-General on cooperatives in social development (A/56/73-E/2001/68), he said that it was regrettable that only 21 Governments had given their views on the draft guidelines aimed at creating a supportive environment for the development of cooperatives. India had been a pioneer in the cooperative movement, starting in 1905, and it continued to play an important role not only as a mode of production but also as a distribution system.

15. It was heartening that almost all Member States had implemented national youth policies, as the Secretary-General pointed out in his report on implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (A/56/180), since it was time to look at sectoral issues that affected youth

throughout the world, particularly the issue of employment.

16. Since 2001 was the International Year of Volunteers, India, which contributed to the Special Voluntary Fund of the United Nations Volunteers and had several volunteers working for the United Nations, hoped that the proposed draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

17. Lastly, on the eve of the Second World Assembly on Ageing, it was necessary to take full advantage of the productive capacities of older persons, particularly in developing countries, where the proportion of persons over 60 years of age in the population would be increasing, taking care that their integration into society was not perceived to be in conflict with opportunities for youth and other age groups.

18. **Ms. Mahouve** (Cameroon) associated herself with the statement made by the representative of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on implementation of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly. She stressed that there was a glaring contradiction between the stated desire of the international community to work for social development and the current situation in the world: 3 billion people lived on less than two dollars a day, 1 billion people, including 600 million women were illiterate, 1.4 billion people did not have access to basic social services, 14 million children still died every year from lack of health care and more than 158 million workers were unemployed. Her delegation, convinced that the eradication of poverty was currently the main challenge, welcomed the role played by the United Nations and international institutions in general, in particular the Bretton Woods institutions. She supported the commitments made in the social sector during the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, in particular with regard to respect for basic principles and rights such as the right to work and the need to invest in social infrastructure and reinforce the health and education sectors. She welcomed the decision of the Economic and Social Council to devote its 2002 high-level segment to the theme of development of human capital, in particular in the education and health sectors. A comprehensive approach must be adopted with regard to strategies to eliminate poverty, by paying particular attention to the needs of women and children and by highlighting access to basic primary education, literacy, life expectancy, reduction of infant and maternal mortality rates, and the fight against unemployment. Her Government had succeeded in promoting growth and controlling inflation and, with the help of external partners, had worked to maintain peace, security and stability, consolidate democracy and the rule of law and promote and protect human rights. A series of initiatives had been launched, for example the declaration on a strategy to combat poverty, a policy declaration on the health sector which stressed the fight against pandemics, a law on educational priorities which focused on basic education, an action plan for nutrition and food security, a national policy paper on employment, a new urban strategy and a national programme for good governance and combating corruption. Those efforts had led to real progress, in particular a perceptible increase in school attendance, encouraged by providing public primary education free of charge, strengthening of medical coverage through the creation of numerous health centres and a national distribution centre for supplying essential medicines, as well as gradual reduction in the unemployment rate.

19. **Mr. Klamberg** (Sweden), speaking as youth representative in his delegation, on agenda item 108, expressed regret that too few countries, in particular the developing countries, had included youth representatives in their delegations. In the era of globalization, young people, who are well aware of the difficulties, challenges and opportunities connected with that phenomenon, could play an active role in the development of a democratic system and should be included in decision-making at the local, national, regional and global levels so that their concerns, in particular with regard to access to education, health and security, could be taken into account.

20. In Sweden, many local authorities had established youth councils so that young people could be involved in politics and make known their views, although to a large extent, for such bodies to be truly effective, local officials had to be willing to listen. At the international level, young people had prepared a common statement during the World Health Organization (WHO) European Ministerial Conference on Young People and Alcohol and had been active participants in the working group and plenary discussions. He called on Member States to implement the Dakar Youth Empowerment Strategy adopted by the fourth World Youth Forum, which contained valuable recommendations on areas of specific concern to youth,

such as how to bridge the digital divide, the fight against unemployment and poverty, the environment, social integration, conflict prevention through the building of a culture of peace, participation, combating discrimination, and the fight against HIV/AIDS, which currently affected millions of young people. In order to combat the HIV/AIDS pandemic, strategies must be implemented which took into account young people's lifestyle, stressing information and the use of condoms, the most effective method to date to stop the spread of infection.

21. Finally, with regard to health and young people, he called attention to the fate of women who were victims of genital mutilation, a practice which violated their basic right to control their own bodies and called on Member States to take steps to put an end to that practice, for example by increasing awareness and organizing open discussion in the communities concerned and including revision of their penal codes.

22. **Ms. Korneliouk** (Belarus), speaking on agenda item 27, welcomed the fact that the Commission for Social Development had adopted a multi-year programme of work for the period 2002-2006. Recalling that the documents that had emerged from the World Summit for Social Development and the special session of the General Assembly stipulated that it was in the first place for Governments to ensure their people's social development and welfare, she said that Belarus had set itself the task of establishing a market economy with a social dimension, taking into account the mentality, history and traditions of the Belarusian people and the experience of other States. With that in view, it had prepared a national strategy for sustainable development, an integrated system of social welfare measures and a development programme to be implemented by 2005, centred on improved State structures and on socio-economic development. The programme was, inter alia, aimed at enhancing the country's demographic situation by reducing infant mortality and mortality among the active population, especially men, and by raising life expectancy and increasing the population's income by some 60 per cent and real wages by approximately 80 per cent.

23. Mindful that social development was linked to the country's economic growth, Belarus had set out to improve its economic situation and increase investments and housing construction; moreover, its gross domestic product had risen by 27.7 per cent in the previous four years. The country had embarked on a strategy of social reforms designed to guarantee access to basic social services and to enable all persons who were capable of working to provide for their needs and for those of their families and to enable those who could not do so to receive social assistance. There was, of course, still the problem of finding the resources to finance that social assistance without jeopardizing the development of other sectors, in particular the education sector, in which the adult literacy rate currently stood at 98.4 per cent.

24. In conclusion, she said that, if the goals were to be met, coordinated, effective and integrated action was called for at both the national and the international levels.

25. **Ms. Kidanu** (Ethiopia) said that her delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. She stressed the difficulty of achieving social development in a situation in which poverty, unemployment, conflict and natural and man-made disasters prevailed, as they did in Ethiopia, where the majority of the population lived in absolute poverty and drought was recurrent, and where environmental degradation and population pressure had weakened the resource base on which sustainable development depended. The decline in official development assistance and the crippling debt burden had only exacerbated the situation, especially in the least developed countries. Therefore, if social development efforts were to bear fruit and economic reforms were to succeed, creditor nations and multilateral financial institutions should simply cancel the debt, instead of rescheduling it or proposing the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative.

26. It was her delegation's conviction that each country must take charge of its own social development and that the appeal to the international community was merely a call for it to help the least developed countries to remove the obstacles to their social development. That was why, in order to fulfil the commitments entered into at the World Summit for Social Development, her Government had adopted policies and strategies on population, health, education, women, employment and HIV/AIDS centred on the family (all discriminatory provisions concerning marriage and the family had been struck from its domestic legislation), children, youth, women (whose fundamental rights the authorities had been at pains to protect) and older persons, including those with disabilities, on the

understanding that responsibility for meeting the needs of those social groups rested with the communities, civil society, non-governmental organizations and the Government.

27. The Government had introduced a microcredit scheme for young people, so that they could engage in income-generating activities, and had endeavoured to increase their participation in various social and development activities. The national programme of action for persons with disabilities was based on the development social welfare policy and the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. The Rehabilitation Affairs Department, for its part, was conducting campaigns to raise public awareness of the contribution that older persons could make to society with their knowledge, experience and wisdom.

28. **Mr. Gabay** (Israel), speaking on agenda item 108, said he was convinced that the entire international community and each individual State should make the participation of young people in decision-making and their integration into society one of their priority tasks. He paid special tribute to the Programme on Youth of the Division for Social Policy and Development in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, and noted with satisfaction that activities undertaken on behalf of young people as part of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond had been stepped up. Young people had shown themselves worthy of confidence by their creative and innovative talents in the high-technology area and their ability to set up and run small companies in those fields and to use computers to find markets which generated jobs and income; it would therefore be beneficial to invite them to take seats in parliaments and jobs in administrations and to become members of delegations to international organizations. That might also be a way of showing their elders that they did not have a monopoly on wisdom, the spirit of initiative or the power to put ideas into practice.

29. In order for globalization to improve the situation of young people, and particularly young people in the developing countries and the least developed countries who would be forging their countries' futures, they had to have the daily tools of scientific and technological progress.

30. It might perhaps be a good idea to organize economic summits, on the model of the Davos Forum, which would enable young people in developing countries to meet young business leaders, young experts in advanced technologies and young specialists in communications and information.

31. He welcomed the fact that the fourth session of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations System, meeting in Dakar, Senegal, had adopted the Dakar Youth Empowerment Strategy which provided a comprehensive review of the question and at the same time made a real plea on behalf of youth. Even if they implemented only half of the recommendations it contained, countries would, in his opinion, contribute to the well-being of all social strata in their societies because, after all, the youth of today would soon be adults and eventually older persons. For its part, Israel was committed to a dynamic policy on behalf of youth, based on the commitments set out in the Copenhagen Declaration.

32. Replying to the somewhat disagreeable remarks which the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic had made with regard to Israel when speaking of the occupied territories and human rights violations, he said, with regard to the first point, that the Syrian Arab Republic should begin by putting its own house in order and, with regard to the second point, that it ill became that country to be giving lessons to others. It would be much better employed putting the emphasis on negotiations, the peace process and regional cooperation.

33. **Ms. Elliott** (Guyana), associating her delegation with the statements made by the representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, Saint Lucia on behalf of the CARICOM Group, and Chile on behalf of the Rio Group, said that leading financial experts were pointing to a dangerous slow-down of the global economy in both the developed and the developing countries. It was a slow-down that the attack on the World Trade Center had worsened by undermining consumer confidence in the United States, which was the driving force of the global economy. The situation was particularly worrying because it was likely to increase the number of people living in poverty, as well as the number of unemployed and underemployed, worsen health problems and put health systems under severe pressure. In that regard, her delegation particularly welcomed the fact that the Millennium Declaration had placed emphasis on social development issues, and it awaited with interest the United Nations Conference on

Financing for Development, which, it was convinced, had the potential to mobilize resources and thereby promote the creation of an environment that was favourable to social development.

34. As far as social development was concerned, the international community had wisely focused on access to basic social services, poverty eradication, social integration, full employment and gender equality. Her delegation welcomed the UNESCO proposal for a United Nations literacy decade in light of the fact that there were still 880 million illiterate young people and adults worldwide and that information and education were more indispensable for development than ever. With regard to young people, particularly, her delegation was fully persuaded that they had to be given every opportunity to realize their potential as agents for change and development. It was necessary to be vigilant in addressing the challenges which prevented youth empowerment such as poverty, hunger, homelessness, disease, crime, violence and alienation.

35. The International Year of Older Persons had demonstrated the need to develop long-term policies for that group of the population. The Second World Assembly on Ageing, to be held in Madrid, Spain, in 2002, would enable the attention of the international community to be focused on the concerns of older persons, the development implications of ageing societies and the need for a lifetime approach to education, health, employment and the upgrading of skills. Guyana intended to play an active part in the preparatory process for the Assembly.

36. In presenting his country's budget for 2001, the Minister of Finance of Guyana had reaffirmed the importance of placing people at the centre of development and had proposed a number of important initiatives in the areas of education, health, water supply and sanitation, housing and poverty programmes. The Government of Guyana had budgeted almost G$ 12 billion in 2002 for improving the quality of the education system and for continuing to emphasize individual responsibility, equity and quality, primary health care and institutional strengthening.

37. With respect to poverty reduction, she said that her Government was implementing an employment strategy which involved providing an investment-friendly climate that would create earning opportunities for all Guyanese. It would also use the resources made available to it in the context of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative to bolster expenditure in key sectors such as health, housing, water supply, sanitation and education, so as to improve living conditions. Those measures would be added to existing programmes that targeted different categories of the poor, especially youth and rural communities.

38. It must be reiterated that a long-term approach to social development was indispensable; it must involve all actors in society and the international community. The international community had a particularly significant role to play in reducing income disparities among countries, as well as in ensuring that the developed countries met their commitment to allocate 0.7 per cent of GNP for official development assistance, debt relief and greater market access for exports of developing countries.

39. The new global human order proposed in General Assembly resolution 55/48, which focused on human development and poverty reduction, was of particular importance.

40. **Ms. Nicole** (Benin), speaking on behalf of her country and other West African countries (Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo), said that those delegations endorsed the statement made by the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

41. Social development was a matter of serious concern to the West African countries, most of which were developing countries that also belonged to the group of least developed countries. The fact that the primary responsibility for development lay with government did not detract from concern regarding the resources needed for action. Indeed, the economic liberalization that many developing countries had carried out had not only aggravated their situation but had also led to a weakening of the State and a breakdown of management, which, if they continued, could end in disaster. Despite the laudable efforts that had been made after the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, substantial segments of the population of the West African countries still did not have access to potable water, electricity and other forms of energy or adequate primary health care, and their illiteracy rates remained high. Far from a reduction of the role of the State, what was needed was

a stronger State that would be able to deal with the problems of society. The stakes were particularly high for the West African countries, given that solving their social problems was a prerequisite to restoring peace to a region torn apart by wars caused mainly by poverty and underdevelopment, and to moving on to modernization and globalization.

42. The West African countries faced tremendous difficulties as they strove to attain social development. In addition to the aforementioned armed conflicts, they were faced with the AIDS pandemic, and other contagious diseases, unemployment, child labour, a decline in the literacy rate and in agricultural production, poverty, the breakdown of families and dwindling resources. The UNDP Report on Human Development also showed that the ten most backward of all the African least developed countries were in West Africa.

43. In order to get out of the rut they were in, the West African countries were working in key areas such as health, employment, education, refugees and peacekeeping. In Lusaka, Zambia, the heads of State and other African leaders had launched an initiative for Africa which, if successful, should make pacification possible and allow for progress towards democracy, proper management of public affairs, cooperation and regional integration, and help solve many problems in the areas of education and health. The international community should increase its economic and financial aid to the least developed African countries, especially the West African countries, and provide them with greater debt relief.

44. The problems of the West African countries had seriously compromised the fabric of their society. The very essence of family life was threatened. Parents were placing their children with other families in order to keep them from suffering the torment of poverty, and more and more older persons were being abandoned. Accordingly, the West African countries attached great importance to the second World Assembly on Ageing, in which they planned to participate actively, and to the follow-up to the International Year of the Family and preparations for the tenth anniversary of the Year, to be held in 2004.

45. The West African countries looked to the Commission for Social Development for help in their social development efforts and were committed to supporting it as it carried out its difficult task.

46. **Ms. Rajaonarivelo** (Madagascar) said that the reports before the Committee underscored once again that globalization widened the gap in development between South and North. The thinking behind globalization — liberalization, privatization, State disengagement — resulted in a deterioration of social services in the least developed countries that generated poverty and violence. Globalization could have favourable repercussions on the economic and social development of the developing countries, but only if their needs were taken into account, as emphasized in the Millennium Declaration.

47. Madagascar wholeheartedly supported the statement made by the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Her Government recognized the basic importance of social and human progress and was endeavouring to implement the recommendations in the Millennium Declaration and the Copenhagen Programme of Action. By joining the consensus achieved during the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, it had reaffirmed its determination to achieve the goals of the session. Madagascar was convinced that other countries as well would do their utmost to achieve those goals, which were essentially to eradicate poverty, to create employment and to promote social integration.

48. During the 1990s, the international community had set itself the target of halving the number of persons living in extreme poverty by 2015. Unfortunately, at the moment — as brought out in the Economic and Social Council's *Report on the World Social Situation, 2001* — the experience of many countries was that the situation was clearly worsening, with rising social exclusion, instability, insecurity and crime. As all were well aware, that deterioration was due to the lack of resources, which aggravated economic problems. Madagascar thus looked forward with anticipation to the convening in 2002 of the International Conference on Financing for Development, which should make it possible to reassess the financial needs of the poor countries. By the same token, without minimizing the importance of organized transnational crime or of terrorism, economic and social development should be considered a priority.

49. While Governments were the ones primarily responsible for social development, they must nonetheless be able to count on international cooperation, which therefore remained crucially

important. It would thus be particularly desirable if official development assistance to the developing countries and especially to the poorest countries was increased, if their debt was altogether cancelled, if their products were given greater access to world markets and if the countries were equipped with the new technologies.

50. To ensure its own social development, Madagascar was carrying out a programme centred on the reduction of poverty, which was essential for the well-being of the population and the maintenance of social peace but was difficult to achieve. Low household incomes and the need to spend most of the family budget for food had the effect not only of limiting access to health services but also of lowering school attendance rates and increasing school drop-out rates, thus robbing the younger generation of any possibility of improving their lives. The Government hoped that by taking steps to encourage increased growth, create jobs, expand education, develop human resources and broaden the safety nets and the access of the poor to health services, it would break that vicious circle.

51. Madagascar agreed that there was a danger that the ageing of the population might compromise human development, and believed it essential to improve the situation of the elderly in order to enable them to participate fully in social life. In that connection, her delegation thanked the Government of Spain for offering to host the Second World Assembly on Ageing and hoped that once the Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing was revised, it would be possible to offer greater protection to older persons and give them a greater share in social development.

52. **Mr. Langmore** (Director, Division for Social Policy and Development) said that the consideration of agenda items 27, 108 and 109 had not only been full and interesting but had also been given greater urgency by the very fresh memory of the attack against the World Trade Center, to which many delegations had referred. During the debate, the Committee had for the first time considered the follow-up to the outcome document of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly held in Geneva in 2000 on social development, and had been able to use the *Report on the World Social Situation, 2001* (ST/ESA/277-E/2001/70) to guide and enrich the discussion.

53. After a systematic review of the major themes touched on in the statements of the forty or so delegations which had spoken, he noted that six resolutions relating to the agenda items under consideration were in the process of negotiation. The urgency of the debate showed that social development was in the forefront of the concerns of nations and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs was thereby encouraged to work even more closely with its national and international partners to implement the social development strategies.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.